

Washington, DC - Pointing to a lack of Presidential commitment to address security concerns at our nation's ports, Democrats across the country marked Monday as National Port Security Day. Joining in the chorus of voices advocating for more funding, Congressman Pete Stark (D-Fremont) and Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-Oakland) called the administration's handling of port security empty rhetoric.

"The Bush Administration continues to talk the talk on port security, but as we've found on other domestic priorities ranging from a Medicare prescription drug benefit to expanding access to child care, the President never matches his rhetoric with necessary funds," Stark said.

"Much like his commitment to the No Child Left Behind Act, federal election reform, and our global AIDS initiative, the President has refused to provide the money necessary to upgrade our port security system," said Lee.

Based on his own budget requests to Congress, the President has not asked for a single dollar in port security grants following the September 11th attacks. And so far, the Republican-controlled Congress has appropriated only \$388 million, despite the fact that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has received grant applications totaling almost \$2.7 billion -- a clear signal of the great needs of this country's ports.

As the fourth largest container port in the country, the Port of Oakland applied for grants for new security projects totaling nearly \$60 million, but has received only \$6.2 million.

"Clearly the Port of Oakland is not getting the money it needs to improve its security infrastructure," said Lee. "Unfortunately that's been the case at virtually every single port in the country."

"Every day that we delay in providing much-needed funding for port security is another day that terrorists may take advantage of vulnerabilities in our security system," said Lee.